

BRAUERIA 26

Lunz, June 2000

Dear Trichopterologist,

You may know that the 4th edition of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature is now published, after a long delay, and its recommendations took effect from 1 January 2000. Many rules are new, and some will certainly cause further discussion. One of the minor new recommendations is 73C.2.: "An author who establishes a new nominal species-group taxon should publish at least the following data concerning the holotype, if they are relevant and known to the author: ... the full locality (**including geographic coordinates**), date, and other data on the labels accompanying it; ..."

Many workers did not find it necessary to indicate localities by coordinates if they are characterised by larger geographic or administrative units. That may apply in countries such as the United States where one can buy in any bookstore a Road Atlas in which all counties are easily found. But in most countries, atlases of this kind are hard to find, or the maps do not indicate the counties, districts, provinces and the like, or their borders and, even worse, their names may often change (as Central Europeans know well from their own experience).

But coordinates should be given not only to characterise holotype sites but any localities in a paper, if it makes sense and is not too difficult.

For many authors the use of what they call geographic coordinates is normal, but there is no general agreement which ones should be used. Only to look through a few recent entomological journals: in a journal from Germany I found **4634.2**, in a journal from Belgium **35TLG01**, in one from Britain **V.C.58** and **SW649258**, and in one from Switzerland **283/158**. There is no explanation to which system these numbers refer! This would be the same situation as if I wrote letters to friends in Swahili or Urdu, when I knew that they did not understand these languages!

But even if I know what in Germany "MTB 4634.2" means, how may I find the Meßtischblatt map with this number among about 7000 maps alone for this country? Certainly not in my own library, nor in any museum's library in my country. Nobody will buy thousands of maps from many countries just to find out the localities of some insects.

It is a basic condition of communication to use only systems which are known to both sender and receiver, and for our purposes only one generally accepted system is available, which is the geographic coordinate system with the zero point Greenwich, with 90° north and south, and 180° east and west. Some countries use similar systems but with zero point Athens (Greece), Ferro (formerly Austria), and others. Be particularly careful in France: The well known Michelin road maps use a decimal system, i.e. 100 units each instead of 90, 180 or 60, and with the zero point Paris. This may cause serious mistakes as Paris is close to Greenwich and the difference may be overlooked. Although the French system is easier and more logical, it should be avoided because it is mainly unknown outside France.

Most remarkable is the use of UTM grid numbers (e.g. 35TLG01) although no maps are available with this grid!! (or if they are, they must be very secret). One really wonders what those entomological societies were thinking about when they recommended this system for general use. Certainly it is easy to write down the UTM grid number for a locality when it was caught by a GPS instrument (which should be better used to identify the coordinates), but how can the reader of the label then find out where this was, without maps?? Surely there are computer programmes to calculate from one to the other system, but firstly one has to have such a programme, and secondly, one must be able to work with it, as they are very complicated. So please do not use UTM grids, and please pass on this information to others!

By the way: a great help for finding unknown localities is:

<http://www.nima.mil> and <http://164.214.2.59/gns/html/index.html>.

as I had already noted in BRAUERIA 25:6.

The recommended label for this editor's letter is:

Austria inferior Lunz am See, 600m 47°51'N, 15°02'E 25.6.2000, Malicky

Yours sincerely,

